Shelburne Town Plan Update

Community Engagement Final Report

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Executive Summary & Key Themes

In advance of Shelburne's upcoming Town Plan update, the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) conducted a community engagement process from January through May 2026 to better understand residents' priorities, concerns, opportunities, and aspirations for the future of the community. Through interviews, focus groups, community events, committee discussions, a public meeting, and a survey, residents shared their perspectives on the issues and opportunities facing Shelburne. This report summarizes the feedback received and is intended to help inform the Town Plan update.

While perspectives differed on specific issues, several themes emerged consistently throughout the engagement process:

Shelburne residents are not opposed to change, but they want it to be intentional.

Many participants recognized that Shelburne will continue to grow and evolve. Rather than opposing change outright, residents frequently discussed where growth should occur, what it should look like, and how it can support broader community goals. Participants generally supported directing housing and development toward the Village Center, Route 7 corridor, and other developed areas while continuing to protect the farms, forests, open space, and natural resources that define Shelburne’s character for so many.

Housing is about more than housing.

Unsurprisingly, housing emerged as one of the most discussed topics throughout the engagement process. Residents consistently connected housing to workforce challenges, economic vitality, community diversity, school enrollment, aging in place, and the ability of future generations to live in Shelburne. Many participants expressed support for a wider range of housing choices, particularly housing that is attainable for middle-income households, workers, young families, and older adults.

Residents want a more connected community.

Transportation, housing, economic development, and community life were often discussed together. Participants expressed support for safer walking and biking infrastructure, improved public transportation, stronger neighborhood connections, and a more vibrant Village Center. Residents also emphasized the importance of gathering places, local businesses, parks, trails, and community events that help people connect with one another. Newer and longtime residents alike expressed interest in more opportunities to build relationships, strengthen community connections, and engage with

one another. Many residents also expressed support for investing in connected and well-maintained walking and biking infrastructure, even if doing so requires additional public investment.

Questions of affordability, inclusion, and belonging surfaced throughout the engagement process.

Across many topics, residents returned to questions about who can afford to live in Shelburne, who benefits from community investments, and whether people from different backgrounds and income levels feel welcomed and represented. Participants frequently discussed affordability, diversity, accessibility, and civic participation not as separate issues, but as factors that influence the long-term health and sustainability of the community.

Throughout the engagement process, residents repeatedly raised questions such as:

- Who benefits from local decisions, and who is left out?
- Who can afford to live here? More housing for whom?
- Economic development for whom, and to what end?
- Whose voices are heard, and whose are not?
- Will the process of change meaningfully involve those who will be most affected?

Participants emphasized that the conversation is not simply about more growth or less growth. Rather, it is about what kind of growth occurs, who it serves, who helps shape it, and who ultimately benefits from the investments and decisions made today.

How to Use this Report

This report summarized feedback gathered through the community engagement process conducted between January and May 2026. It reflects the perspectives, concerns, ideas, and aspirations shared by residents, business owners, community organizations, municipal committee members, and others who participated in interviews, focus groups, events, meetings, and the survey.

The purpose of this report is not to translate feedback directly into Town Plan actions or to suggest a single course of action. Rather, it is intended to serve as a resource for the Planning Commission, Town staff, elected officials, and community members as they undertake the Town Plan update and future community discussions. The findings highlight recurring themes, areas of agreement, questions raised by residents, and perspectives that may warrant further consideration.

Community engagement is most meaningful when participants can see how their input informs future conversations and decisions. It is our hope that this report will be revisited throughout the Town Plan update process and used alongside other planning considerations to help ensure that community perspectives remain part of the conversation.

Community Engagement Process

To support the Town Plan update, the Town of Shelburne and the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) conducted a broad range of engagement activities designed to reach residents through both formal and informal settings. Rather than organizing engagement around individual Town Plan chapters, CCRPC designed the process to facilitate conversations around some of the key opportunities, tensions, and tradeoffs facing Shelburne's future. Discussions focused on themes such as housing and community character, economic development and environmental stewardship, transportation and accessibility, affordability and inclusion, and community wellbeing and municipal capacity. This approach encouraged participants to think holistically about the challenges and opportunities facing the town, identify areas of consensus and disagreement, and explore how Shelburne might balance competing priorities while preserving the qualities that residents value most.

The engagement process also intentionally prioritized outreach to residents who are often underrepresented in municipal planning processes, including youth, renters, lower-income residents, immigrants and refugees, older adults, and residents of affordable housing communities. To build upon existing community knowledge and reduce engagement fatigue, CCRPC also reviewed and incorporated findings from previous engagement efforts conducted in Shelburne and the region.

Engagement activities reached **over 600 residents** and included:

- **Six interviews** with Town staff and committee members to help design the engagement process.
- **Two Planning Commission meetings** focused on developing and refining the engagement strategy.

- **Thirteen interviews** with community leaders, business owners, farmers, mobile home park residents, and representatives of community organizations.
- **Eight focus groups** with community members, including older adults at the Wright House & Harrington Village, youth through Shelburne Community School, community members who speak languages other than English, low-income residents, library groups, and CCRPC's Community Engagement Advisory Committee.
- **Engagement with Shelburne committees** including the Housing Committee, Bike and Pedestrian Paths Committee, Equity and Diversity Committee, and Climate and Energy Committee.
- **One public meeting.**
- **Outreach at community events** including Town Meeting Day, Farmers Market, school events, a housing event, food shelf distribution days, and other community gatherings.
- **363 survey responses.**

Community Feedback: What We Heard

For access to the complete collection of community comments and feedback, including all unabridged responses, please contact Anne Nelson Stoner (anstoner@ccrpcvt.org) or Maya Balassa (mbalassa@ccrpvt.org).

What Residents Value Most About Shelburne

Across interviews, focus groups, community events, and surveys, residents consistently described Shelburne as a community defined by its natural beauty, strong sense of community, and high quality of life. While responses varied, several themes emerged repeatedly.

Theme	Frequently Mentioned Examples
Community & Belonging	Friendly neighbors, seeing people you know around town, welcoming atmosphere, community events, gratitude, feeling supported
Natural Beauty & Open Space	Shelburne Farms, Lake Champlain, Meach Cove, Shelburne Pond, trails, forests, wildlife, scenery, foliage
Community Gathering Spaces	Pierson Library, Farmers Market, Town Green, Shelburne Museum, Shelburne Country Store
Walking & Accessibility	Walking to the library, walking to the village, accessing services without a car, trail connections, bike access
Small Town Character	Quiet atmosphere, village scale, rural character, safety, local businesses
Recreation & Culture	Sports fields, Winter Lights, Shelburne Museum, hiking, biking, community events

While residents frequently cited places such as Shelburne Farms, the lake, trails, and open spaces, they spoke just as often about the relationships and experiences associated with those places. The Pierson Library was one of the most frequently mentioned assets, not simply as a building, but as a gathering place that fosters connection, learning, and community life. Similarly, residents often described valuing Shelburne's small-town feel, the ability to see familiar faces around town, and opportunities to connect through local events and businesses.

What Residents Hope to See in Shelburne by 2050

Throughout the engagement process, residents were asked to imagine what they would like Shelburne to be like in the year 2050. Responses were collected through sticky-note activities at community events, public meetings, and other engagement opportunities. The image below captures residents' responses. These comments have also informed the findings and themes summarized throughout this report.

Housing

Finding 1: Residents increasingly view housing as a community sustainability issue, not just a housing issue.

Many participants discussed housing in relation to broader challenges facing the community. Residents frequently expressed concern that the rising cost of housing is making it difficult for young people, families, workers, and older adults to remain in or move to Shelburne. Several participants noted that they would not be able to afford to

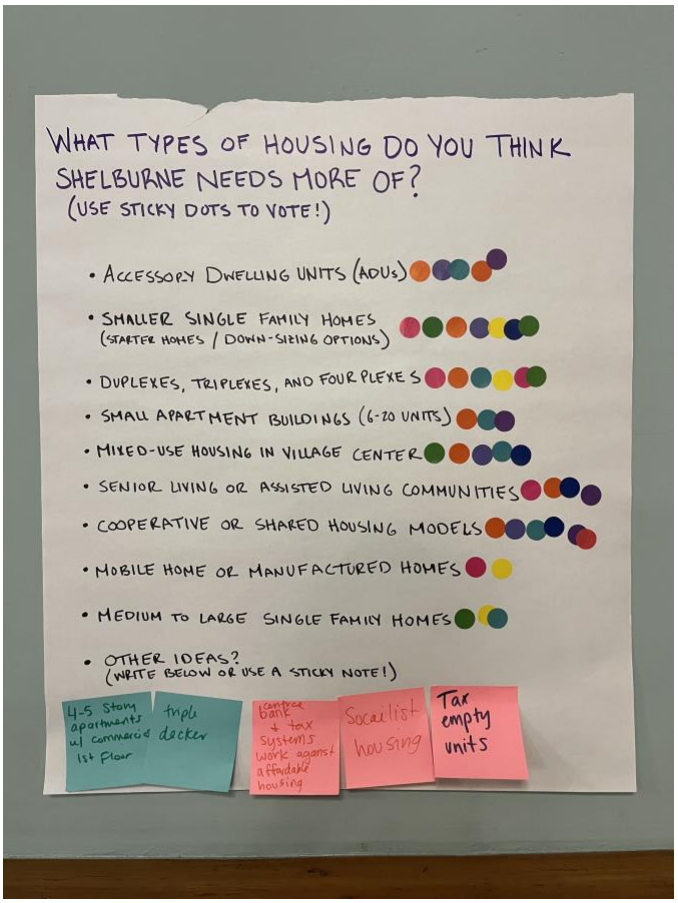
purchase their home in Shelburne today and felt that they were only able to become part of the community because they bought their home years ago, before housing prices increased significantly.

Business owners, farmers, and community members also raised concerns about workforce housing, affordability, demographic change, and the ability of people who work in Shelburne to also live in Shelburne. Participants frequently connected housing challenges to broader concerns about economic vitality, community diversity, school enrollment, and the town's long-term future.

Representative comments:

- “The housing shortage impacts everybody.”
- “Nobody who works here can live here. We expect people to work in Shelburne, but we’ve made it increasingly difficult for them to actually be a part of the community.”
- "The affordable housing issue is a business killer. It really is. It's hard enough to keep a business going, and then you lose employees because they can't find housing. It's brutal."
- “The only reason I live here is because I bought my home years ago. If I were trying to move here today, I couldn't afford it.”
- “A two-income household with no kids still can’t afford to live here.”
- “If I wanted to buy a house, I’d need to win the lottery.”

Finding 2: Residents support a wider range of housing types and believe the community is missing “middle” housing options.



Participants consistently expressed support for expanding housing choice and creating options beyond large single-family homes and large apartment complexes. Frequently mentioned housing types included ADUs, modular homes, duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, townhomes, condominiums, workforce housing, cooperative housing, senior housing, and smaller homes.

Many residents described a lack of options for first-time homebuyers, downsizing seniors, middle-income households, and people seeking smaller or more affordable homes.

Representative comments:

- "The missing middle needs to be in the Town Plan."
- "We need more types of ALL housing."
- "We need well-built, relatively inexpensive homes available in volume. The materials need to be high-quality, but not luxury. People can make upgrades later."
- "Small, affordable homes are missing. Like, actually affordable homes ($175,000-$250,000). Rental units help, but ownership is the cornerstone to long-term financial stability."
- "We need starter homes so young people and young families have a chance to stay in the community."
- "Why not convert empty, large homes into multi-unit housing?"

Finding 3: Residents generally support directing new housing toward existing growth areas and locations with infrastructure.

One of the strongest areas of agreement was that future housing should be concentrated in locations already served by infrastructure, services, and transportation options. Frequently identified locations included the Village Center, Route 7 corridor, Rice Lumber property, motel redevelopment sites, and other developed areas served by water and wastewater infrastructure.

Many residents viewed this approach as a way to accommodate housing needs while reducing pressure on forests, farmland, and open space.

Representative comments:

- “Build more in the town center so we can preserve the rural areas.”
- “Build on the most accessible plots of land rather than spreading development into forests and farmlands.”
- “Housing should be built where infrastructure already exists.”
- “If we’re going to grow, let’s grow where people can walk, bike, use transit, and access services.”
- “More incentives for infill development. Let’s move towards smaller lot requirements, more like the European downtown models.”
- “Dense housing!”

Finding 4: Many residents believe housing and conservation goals can be achieved simultaneously.

While concerns about the loss of open space and wildlife habitat were common, many participants rejected the idea that housing and conservation are mutually exclusive. Residents frequently discussed compact development, infill, redevelopment, and clustered housing as ways to provide homes while protecting natural resources and working lands.

Representative comments:

- “Growth and conservation are possible.”
- “You can continue to conserve spaces and integrate more housing.”
- “Protect the woods but develop more in the growth center.”
- “Build housing with shared green spaces.”
- “Don’t build in the flood plain.”
- “Focus on affordable multi-unit housing that blends into the natural area.”
- “Build with the future in mind. Are they being built with sustainable materials? In harmony with the environment?”

Finding 5: Residents want housing that contributes to community life and neighborhood character.

Many participants viewed housing as an opportunity to strengthen community life rather than simply accommodating population growth. Residents frequently connected housing to local businesses, school enrollment, community diversity, walkability, and the overall

vibrancy of the town. Several participants expressed interest in development patterns that bring people together, create opportunities for interaction, and support a more vibrant Village Center.

Participants also discussed the relationship between housing and isolation, questioning whether the traditional pattern of large homes on large lots is the only model Shelburne should pursue in the future. Some expressed interest in multigenerational housing, communal living arrangements, and neighborhood designs that encourage social connection.

Residents frequently emphasized how housing looks and fits into its surroundings matters. Many participants indicated that opposition to housing is often driven less by the idea of new housing itself and more by concerns about design, scale, aesthetics, and integration with the landscape. Several residents suggested incorporating more trees, green space, and vegetative buffers into future developments, particularly along Route 7.

Representative comments:

- “More housing would support local businesses and be a game changer.”
- "Build up the downtown so civic assets like the schools and library, and essential services like the grocery store, are walkable.”
- “I don’t think people should be living in a nuclear family in huge houses with a yard. It’s so isolating. Why not build more communal housing? More developments that are oriented towards community, not isolation?”
- “Want multigenerational neighborhoods.”
- “People don’t like the way the new big apartment buildings look, it’s not about being against providing more housing. Just be thoughtful about it and make it fit with the character.”
- "Just adding a buffer of trees between developments and Route 7 would make a difference.”

Finding 6: Housing discussions frequently centered on questions of equity, inclusion, and who gets to be a part of the community.

Throughout engagement, residents repeatedly returned to questions about who can afford to live in Shelburne and who benefits from the community’s opportunities and amenities. The housing crisis was commonly expressed as sadness that workers, young families, lower-income households and others could not become a part of the community.

Residents frequently connect housing affordability to diversity, economic opportunity, community sustainability, and homelessness. Several participants highlighted existing

affordable housing communities, including Bay Ridge, Harrington Village, and the town's mobile home parks, as important parts of Shelburne's housing landscape. Participants noted that these communities provide not only affordable housing, but also strong social connections and a sense of belonging.

Discussions also raised questions about the relationship between new development and community character. While some residents expressed concern about change, others questioned whether preserving "character" should always be the primary consideration, noting that many beloved community assets were once new and different themselves.

Representative comments:

- “I hope for more housing and more diversity. Right now, it’s just elderly white people.”
- “People deserve housing.”
- “More housing would result in less homelessness”
- “We want more affordable housing like Bay Ridge and Harrington Village.”
- “If I wanted to buy a house, I’d need to win the lottery.”
- “Is maintaining character necessary? The Library is new and different from the historic character, but people love it.”

Economic Development

Finding 1: Residents envision a more vibrant, walkable, and active Village Center.

The Village Center is highly valued by residents. Residents envision the Village Center growing with more small businesses, housing, and transportation networks. To navigate a larger Village Center, residents hoped the Town would add more crosswalks across Route 7, add more sidewalks, repair existing sidewalks, reduce speed along Route 7 and surrounding roads, and improve the intersection of Route 7 and Falls Road. Coordinated parking, with increased signage was a repeated request in the Village Center, for both locals and tourists. Business owners and residents spoke about more events occurring in the Village Center to create a more vibrant community gathering space.

Representative comments:

- “Prime village locations should prioritize private-sector, community-oriented uses that help create a more active and connected core.”
- “More retail in the village and consolidate parking. Don’t require every new building to have parking!”

- “The whole village area should be more walkable, bikeable, dense, and connect resources and homes.”
- “Clustering businesses in a central, walkable part of the village would help build a stronger sense of community by creating a place where people can park once, walk between stops, and naturally run into neighbors.”

Finding 2: Residents support redevelopment and growth in existing developed areas.

Residents often found that environmental protection and economic development could exist if the Town developed densely and in areas that have already been developed. The Red Apple Motel, Rice Lumber Property, and other underutilized lots were cited as places where growth could happen in conjunction with other Town goals.

To balance growth and sustainability, residents emphasized redevelopment along Route 7 and around the Village Center. Residents were also supportive of increasing height along Route 7 to minimize the environmental impacts of growth. Adding housing above retail was a strategy raised to maximize the use of land.

Representative comments:

- “The woods/nature should be protected, but we should develop more in the growth center. We should be more creative and not put our heals in the ground.”
- “Apartments are good because they take up less space.”
- “Turn the Rice Lumber property into a new, dense downtown area.”
- “The town should think carefully about how its most central real estate is used, with an eye toward maximizing community activity and economic vitality.”
- “The Red Apple Motel could be redeveloped.”
- “Listen to the Lorax; don't cut down the trees.”

Finding 3: Residents want economic development that supports local businesses and entrepreneurs.

It was commonly found that residents love the small, local business environment of Shelburne and oppose “big box” stores opening in town. Small business owners consistently requested support from the Town through collaboration, communication, event coordination, and educational resources. Other residents expressed interest in opening a small business but felt they needed guidance and support from the Town to start. Some of the guidance mentioned included utilizing residents as caterers for Town events and creating small retail space for starter businesses.

Representative comments:

- “Minimize dealerships, support small business development”
- “Don’t want big box stores”
- “It would be nice to have a Shelburne Small Business Association and Rotary Club.”
- “More opportunities for small businesses – more support for small entrepreneurs like a small day care or sewing business”
- “Community programming, like a Fall Festival or Maple Festival, where businesses can participate would be great. A desire for collective coordinating.”

Finding 4: Tourism is viewed as both an important opportunity and a potential source of tension.

Residents and business owners recognize tourism as an important component of Shelburne’s economy and a factor in supporting local businesses. Business owners expressed interest in greater support from the Town through marketing, wayfinding, and signage initiatives that help attract visitors and connect them with local businesses.

At the same time, some residents expressed concern that an increased focus on tourism could divert attention and resources away from other community priorities. These residents emphasized the importance of ensuring that economic development efforts continue to address the needs of year-round residents and contribute to community goals beyond visitor attraction.

Community feedback regarding Shelburne Forward Together reflected this tension. Residents questioned how the current efforts of Shelburne Forward Together align with the priorities identified through the Shelburne Forward Together engagement process. In particular, residents sought greater clarity about who benefits from economic development initiatives and whether current efforts are advancing the community's most frequently identified priorities. These comments suggest a desire for continued communication and engagement around economic development goals, expected outcomes, and how initiatives support the broader vision residents have for Shelburne’s future.

Representative comments:

- “Shelburne has such a rich landscape that could be taken more advantage of, from a tourism perspective. Maybe it is a boardwalk, like Burlington.”
- “We are worried that Shelburne Forward Together is too economic development focused without thinking about inclusivity and affordability – Are they asking: ‘Economic development to what end? For whom?’”

- “Tourism plays an important role in the local economy but may also influence decisions about community priorities and identity.”
- “More things to do while visiting town.’
- "My hope is the top 3-4 initiatives identified in Shelburne Forward Together are actualized: 1) preserve wildlife habitat 2) affordable housing 3) neighborhood connectivity (development was at the bottom of the list)"
- Really want the town and the committee to be asking “WHO is the economic development for?” The committee really needs to be open to all.

Finding 5: Residents frequently linked economic development with community development.

Residents frequently emphasized that economic development should contribute to community connection and enhance opportunities for social interaction. Many noted a lack of businesses and public spaces that encourage people to gather, linger, and build relationships. Cafés, community gathering spaces, and other "third places" were identified as amenities that would strengthen community life while supporting local businesses.

Residents also expressed interest in expanding community-serving spaces within the Village Center, including a senior center, youth center, playground, and other venues that foster connection among residents of all ages. Many viewed these types of investments as complementary to economic development goals, creating a more vibrant and active Village Center that attracts residents, supports local businesses, and strengthens Shelburne's sense of community.

Representative comments:

- “You have to do community development to make economic development work – first we need more community gatherings/connections.”
- “There are currently limited informal spaces for young people to gather, and creating such spaces could meaningfully strengthen the social fabric of the town.”
- “There may be an opportunity to incorporate a more intentional community gathering space, potentially co-located with existing civic infrastructure, where children and families can spend time more comfortably.”
- “Playing fields or a community center brings the community to the businesses around it.”
- “The village would benefit from businesses intentionally designed for people to stay, with visible and inviting outdoor seating in warmer months and comfortable indoor space during the winter.”

Finding 6: Residents expressed differing views about the scale and pace of future growth.

While many residents expressed support for additional businesses and economic activity, there was not universal agreement on the scale or type of development that should be encouraged. Some residents emphasized the importance of carefully balancing economic growth with Shelburne's environmental resources, rural character, and quality of life.

A recurring concern was the potential for new commercial development to increase traffic congestion, particularly if it attracted additional visitors. Others expressed concern about the relationship between economic development and land conservation. Residents noted that open space, farmland, and natural areas are among Shelburne's defining characteristics and worried that poorly located or overly intensive development could contribute to the loss of these resources.

Representative comments:

- "Tourism plays an important role in the local economy but may also influence decisions about community priorities and identity."
- "Traffic would be worse if large stores were located in town."
- "Concerned economic development will decrease open space. Once open space is gone, it's gone."

Finding 7: Residents feel there are gaps in businesses, services, and everyday destinations.

Not all economic development provides the same community benefits. Residents consistently expressed support for development that would help meet more of their daily needs within Shelburne. Frequently identified priorities included a more affordable grocery store, a wider range of dining options, additional childcare services, and businesses that create informal gathering spaces or "third places" for community connection. The need for an affordable grocery store was one of the most commonly cited gaps, particularly among residents without access to a vehicle. Families also repeatedly emphasized the need for more family-friendly dining options.

Representative comments:

- "Prioritize businesses that residents visit frequently—ideally daily or several times a week—as these are the places that create rhythm and familiarity in the community."

- “How to stay in town when it is unaffordable to shop in town.”
- “Desired businesses include a coffee shop that doubles as a community space, showcases local artists, offers varied and comfortable seating both indoors and outdoors, and has sufficient capacity to accommodate demand.”
- “Shelburne Village would benefit from businesses such as a good bagel shop, a casual deli, a bakery closer than Le Marché, a coffee shop with ample seating, a high-quality small grocery or market, a pizza spot where kids can grab a slice after school, and an ice cream shop like The Scoop.”
- “There is an opportunity to rebalance away from occasional-use retail toward businesses that serve everyday needs across age groups.”
- “We need better grocery stores.”

Transportation, Mobility & Connectivity

Finding 1: Residents want a more connected Shelburne where walking and biking are safe, convenient, and enjoyable.

Participants consistently expressed support for expanding and improving walking and biking infrastructure. Residents frequently discussed the desire to safely walk or bike between neighborhoods, schools, parks, businesses, and other community destinations without relying on a car. Increased connectivity throughout the community was a common theme, with many residents viewing sidewalks, paths, and bicycle facilities as important tools for strengthening connections between people and places. Youth participants, in particular, emphasized the importance of being able to bike independently and safely around town.

Representative comments:

- “Kids want to bike to see their friends. We need sidewalks. Think of the safety of kids.”
- “On main roads, the bike path on the road is dangerous. If the sidewalk was bigger, it could be used for both walking and biking.”
- “Want Shelburne to be habitable for families, which means bike and walkability.”

Finding 2: Route 7 is viewed as both a critical transportation corridor and a significant barrier within the community.

Route 7 was one of the most frequently discussed transportation topics. While residents recognize its importance for regional travel and access to businesses and services, many described it as difficult, dangerous, and an impediment to community and connection. Participants frequently discussed the need for interventions to make crossing Rt 7 safer,

wishing that it did not bisect the downtown area so there could be a greater sense of character downtown, better walking and biking infrastructure along and across it, etc.

Representative comments:

- “The crosswalks across Route 7 feel unsafe.”
- “Shelburne should takeover section of Route 7 along in Shelburne.”
- “Route 7 is unsafe to bike on.”

Finding 3: Transportation is closely tied to equity, accessibility, and independence.

Increased transportation options such as walking, biking, and public transit can improve access to jobs, food, medical facilities, outdoor recreation, and other essential services. Residents spoke about the challenges faced by those who do not drive, including youth, older adults, lower-income households, people with disabilities, and others who may have limited access to a personal vehicle. Many noted that transportation is closely tied to opportunity and quality of life and expressed a desire for more affordable and reliable ways to get around town and reach destinations both within and beyond Shelburne. Expanding transportation choice was viewed not only as a mobility issue, but also to improve equity, independence, and access to community resources.

Representative comments:

- “Subsidies to public transportation would be great to help employees.”
- “It has been difficult to get around without a car. People who have lower income are not treated with respect, and businesses are suspicious of residents at the Wright House. I want to prioritize resources for year-round residents. I am worried about low-income stigma.”
- “We need to make sure to keep the bus for folks who don’t have a car.”
- “Better public transportation. The buses are not good. Some people can’t afford to drive everywhere; gas is expensive. It is hard to walk in the winter. In Sweden, you can take public transportation and bike everywhere.”
- “Lack of sidewalks and safe pedestrian connections limits access between lower-income neighborhoods and the town center.”

Finding 4: Residents support maintaining and improving public transportation options.

There was broad support for improved maintenance of existing sidewalk infrastructure, as well as investments in additional facilities that support safe, convenient, and accessible walking and biking throughout town. Residents expressed a desire to be able to walk or bike to their daily destinations, including schools, parks, businesses, community facilities, and neighborhoods, without having to rely on a vehicle. Many participants noted that gaps

in the existing network, limited connectivity, and maintenance challenges can make walking and biking difficult or unsafe.

Representative comments:

- “Make the town easier for walking and biking.”
- “Public transportation and bike paths are very important.”
- “Respectfully, focus more on bike/ped”
- “People in the community want more walkability”

Finding 5: Residents want transportation planning to support broader community goals.

Residents viewed transportation as more than a way to move from place to place. Many described transportation infrastructure as a tool for strengthening community connections, improving quality of life, and supporting broader community goals. Being able to walk or bike to destinations such as school, work, Shelburne Farms, the Library, a grocery store, or a friend’s house was seen as a way to foster a greater sense of community, independence, and belonging.

Residents also emphasized that walking and biking are closely tied to Vermont’s identity and values. Participants described active transportation as an important part of the Vermont lifestyle and expressed a desire for transportation investments that support healthy living, environmental stewardship, and stronger connections between people and places.

- “The bike trails make Vermont feel like Vermont”
- “I want to wake up and hear nature sounds, not traffic. I don’t want to make it convenient for cars. I want to walk to school.”
- “Sidewalks could help with health/well-being.

Finding 6: Residents expressed frustration with the pace of implementation and are supportive of additional staff to advocate and implement more walk/bike infrastructure.

Given the strong support for expanded sidewalks, bike paths, and other multimodal transportation improvements, many residents expressed frustration with the pace of implementation. Participants indicated a willingness to prioritize investments in walking and biking infrastructure and questioned what barriers have prevented more progress. While recognizing the limited capacity of existing Town staff and the many competing demands on municipal resources, some residents suggested creating a dedicated staff

position focused on advancing walk and bike infrastructure projects, pursuing funding opportunities, and coordinating implementation efforts.

Representative comments:

- “What if we get a paid position in town to oversee bike/ped paths?”
- “Would be helpful to have a Director of Public Works. Anything related to traffic calming, sidewalks, crosswalks, falls to the Highway Dept. They’re focused on roads. They are less focused on non-automobile traffic. Idea is that a public works director could hold both goals.”
- “Want more efforts to protect pedestrian safety.”

Community Character, Belonging & Civic Life

Finding 1: Residents value both the places and the relationships that make Shelburne feel like home.

When asked what they value most about Shelburne, residents consistently identified both physical assets and social connections. Frequently mentioned assets included Shelburne Farms, Lake Champlain, Meach Cove, local trails, open spaces, the Village Center, and the Pierson Library. Just as often, residents spoke about knowing their neighbors, seeing familiar faces around town, community events, and the overall sense of community.

Representative comments:

- “Natural beauty, being close to the lake and mountains.”
- “The beauty, the atmosphere, the coziness.”
- “Everything, the people.”
- “Seeing people you know around town.”
- “It is a small community and has everything it needs.”
- “Sense of community.”

Finding 2: Residents want growth that strengthens community character rather than preserving the town exactly as it is today.

Residents frequently expressed a desire to preserve what makes Shelburne special while also recognizing the need for growth, change, economic development, more housing and community investment. Participants frequently shared ideas and hopes as to how to accommodate change while maintaining the qualities they love.

Representative comments:

- “Preserve green space but develop the town center.”

- “Build more in the town center so we can preserve the rural areas.”
- “Some things should stay the same, some should grow.”
- “Growth and conservation are possible.”
- “There are some towns that have packed downtowns but still feel cozy.”
- “Don’t ruin the magic.”

Finding 3: Residents want Shelburne to be a welcoming and inclusive community.

Discussions around community character frequently expanded beyond physical appearance into conversations about who can afford to live in Shelburne and who feels represented in the community.

Residents expressed concern that rising costs are making it harder for younger residents, families, workers, and lower-income households to remain in or move to Shelburne. This exclusion expands into community spaces, civic life, etc. Newer residents want to connect with older residents, and vice versa.

Representative comments:

- “I hope for more housing and more diversity.”
- “Who gets to live here?”
- “People who work here should be able to live here.”
- “The community is really just for wealthy white people.”

Finding 4: Residents want more meaningful opportunities to participate in community decision-making.

Participants frequently expressed interest in being involved in conversations about Shelburne’s future, but many also identified barriers to participation. Residents noted that traditional public meetings do not work for everyone, and that some community members do not feel their voices are heard or represented in local decision making.

The engagement process itself demonstrated that residents are willing and excited to participate when opportunities are accessible, welcoming, and focused on genuine connection and dialogue. Residents want more community building events.

Representative comments:

- “Meet people where they are.”
- “We hope for more meetings like this. People need to meet their neighbors!”
- “There are a lot of voices not being heard.”
- “People want to know what other people are thinking.”

- “If people felt their voices mattered, they would be more likely to attend.”

Finding 5: Residents are seeking a clearer shared vision for Shelburne’s future.

Many participants expressed a desire for continued conversations around where Shelburne is headed and how the community should balance competing priorities. While opinions differed on specific issues, everyone was interested in continuing to explore ways to build a collective future for all residents. Residents want to keep exploring these conversations and questions!

Representative comments:

- “What is our vision?”
- “What are we trying to become?”
- “How do we balance all these priorities?”
- “Some things should stay the same and some things should change.”

Natural Resources, Climate & Conservation

Finding 1: Residents view natural resources as one of Shelburne’s defining assets.

Across nearly every engagement activity, residents identified Shelburne's natural environment as one of the community's greatest strengths. Participants frequently mentioned Shelburne Farms, Lake Champlain, Meach Cove, Shelburne Pond, the LaPlatte River, trails, forests, farmland, wildlife, and scenic views when describing what they value most about living in Shelburne. Natural resources were often discussed not only as environmental assets, but as central to the town's identity, quality of life, recreation opportunities, and economy.

Representative comments:

- "Open space is my favorite part of Shelburne."
- "The natural beauty, being close to the lake and mountains, is what makes this place special."
- "People come here because of the scenery, the farms, the trails, and access to the outdoors."
- "The lake, places to hike, and the serenity."

Finding 2: There is strong support for protecting and increasing access to forests, habitat, water resources, and open space.

Residents consistently expressed support for protecting the natural features that contribute to Shelburne's character and ecological health. Forests, wildlife habitat,

wetlands, water quality, farmland, and open space were all identified as resources worthy of long-term protection. Participants frequently discussed concerns about the loss of trees, fragmentation of habitat, impacts on wildlife, and the gradual loss of open space as development occurs. In addition to conservation, many residents expressed a desire for increased public access to natural resources and outdoor recreation opportunities, including expanded access to trails and free access to beaches. To support equitable access, residents suggested making the Shelburne Town Beach free for residents.

Representative comments:

- "Protect natural resources and protect the community from becoming a town like Williston. Shelburne has places where people can actually enjoy nature."
- "We have to protect the environment. Once it's gone, it's gone."
- "The woods and nature should be protected."
- "We are already losing trees for houses."
- "The amount of nature is going down and getting worse and worse."

Finding 3: Residents increasingly view climate change as a planning issue that should be integrated throughout the Town Plan.

While climate change was not discussed as frequently as housing or conservation, participants who raised the issue generally viewed it as something that should be considered across multiple topic areas rather than addressed through a standalone chapter. Residents connected climate change to transportation choices, housing location, energy use, natural resource protection, flooding, resilience, and community development patterns.

Several participants emphasized the importance of reducing fossil fuel use, supporting renewable energy, and making it easier to walk, bike, and use transit. Others stressed that climate actions should be implemented in ways that are equitable and do not place disproportionate burdens on lower-income residents.

Representative comments:

- "We are facing a crisis and need to have that be the focus—the climate change crisis."
- "Climate change should not be its own chapter, but rather integrated throughout the whole plan as an upfront theme."
- "I do want to support climate action, and I want the Town to as well, but I don't think the burden should fall on people living in lower-income neighborhoods."

- "My hope is that the Town includes actions to reduce fossil fuel use and address climate change rather than allowing other issues to continually take priority."
- "Add solar to town offices, solar-covered parking, and more rooftop solar."

Finding 4: Most residents believe growth and conservation can coexist if growth is directed appropriately.

One of the strongest themes to emerge throughout the engagement process was that residents generally did not view housing, economic development, and conservation as mutually exclusive goals. Instead, many participants supported concentrating development in existing growth areas while protecting forests, farmland, habitat, and open space elsewhere.

Residents frequently discussed the need for thoughtful development patterns, strong environmental standards, and creative approaches that allow both conservation and growth objectives to be achieved.

Representative comments:

- "My personal view is that conservation and climate need not be in conflict with economic development and housing growth."
- "Growth and conservation are possible."
- "Forest blocks are a way to protect land and still allow development."
- "The large landowners who are worried about forest blocks can still build on their property, but in a thoughtful way."
- "Environmental regulations should not be weakened to accommodate development."
- "All development should be evaluated through a natural resources lens first."
- "We should create economic incentives for developers to build green projects."

Agriculture & Working Lands

Finding 1: Residents strongly support preserving farmland and Shelburne's agricultural heritage.

Agriculture was consistently identified as a defining part of Shelburne's identity. Participants frequently referenced farms, agricultural landscapes, local food production, and working lands as assets that contribute to the town's character, economy and sense of place. Many residents expressed strong support for increased protection of farmland and the viability of local farming. Several participants also expressed interest in supporting

regenerative and sustainable agricultural practices that improve soil health, strengthen environmental stewardship, and enhance long-term farm viability.

Representative comments:

- "Agriculture is part of what makes Shelburne, Shelburne. When people think about Shelburne, they think about farms, open fields, and the landscape."
- "We need to protect our farmland, but we also need to make sure farming remains something people can actually do."
- "People come here because of the farms, the scenery, and the connection to the land. Once that landscape changes, you can't really get it back."

Finding 2: Farmers identified economic viability (not land protection) as the greatest concern.

While many residents focused on preserving farmland, farmers often focused on the challenge of keeping farms economically viable. Participants involved in agriculture discussed rising costs, workforce challenges, regulatory requirements, and the difficulty of maintaining profitable operations. Several farmers noted that preserving farmland alone is not enough if farming itself is no longer financially sustainable.

Farmers also expressed interest in exploring ways to provide on-site workforce housing that supports farm operations while maintaining the rural agricultural landscape and character of the community. Some participants questioned whether regulations could be more flexible or tailored to support the unique needs of working farms in a community like Shelburne.

Representative comments:

- "The challenge isn't protecting the land—it's making farming work. If farms aren't profitable, it doesn't matter how much land is protected."
- "Farmers need to be able to make a living. We spend a lot of time talking about preserving farmland, but not enough time talking about what it takes to keep a farm operating."
- "Can regulations be more customizable in a small town like Shelburne? Farming doesn't always fit neatly into a one-size-fits-all set of rules."
- "If farms aren't viable, it doesn't matter how much the land is protected."

Finding 3: Housing affordability and workforce shortages are affecting agricultural operations.

Farmers and agricultural employers frequently connected housing affordability to workforce challenges. Participants described difficulties attracting and retaining employees because housing costs in and around Shelburne have become increasingly unaffordable. Several participants noted that workers often have long commutes or struggle to find housing close to their jobs, creating challenges for agricultural operations and the broader local economy.

Farmers also discussed the difficulty of retaining employees over time, noting that workforce turnover can make it harder to build skills, relationships, and a sense of community within agricultural operations.

Representative comments:

- "The affordable housing issue is a business killer. It really is. It's hard enough to keep a business going, and then you lose employees because they can't find housing. It's brutal."
- "Nobody who works here can live here."
- "It's difficult to get the same people back year after year. When people can't afford to stay in the area, you lose the relationships, experience, and commitment that make a farm operation work."
- "Housing is one of the biggest challenges for finding employees."
- "People who work in Shelburne should be able to live in Shelburne."

Finding 4: Residents support strengthening connections between agriculture, tourism, local food, and community identity.

Participants frequently discussed agriculture as more than an industry. Farms were viewed as important community assets that support tourism, local food systems, education, recreation, environmental stewardship, and community identity. Many residents highlighted the role that farms play in connecting people to the landscape and expressed support for strengthening connections between farms, local food, tourism, and community life.

Several participants also suggested that the Town could play a stronger role in supporting farms through advocacy, promotion, tourism initiatives, and programs that help connect residents with local farms and food producers.

Representative comments:

- "Agriculture isn't just about producing food. It's part of our identity and one of the reasons people want to live here and visit here."

- "People come to Shelburne because of the farms, the scenery, and the rural character. Agriculture and tourism are connected."
- "The Town should think about how it can better support local farms and help connect residents with the people growing food in the community."
- "Farms are part of the community fabric. They support tourism, education, local food, and the character of the town all at the same time."

What We Heard from Shelburne Community School Seventh Graders

CCRPC facilitated discussions with two seventh-grade classes at Shelburne Community School to better understand how young people experience the community and what they hope Shelburne will look like in the future. While students identified many of the same priorities as adult participants, they often framed these issues through the lens of safety, independence, recreation, and opportunities for young people.

Youth value Shelburne's natural environment and small-town character

CCRPC facilitated discussions with two seventh-grade classes at Shelburne Community School to better understand how young people experience the community and what they hope Shelburne will look like in the future. While students identified many of the same priorities as adult participants, they often framed these issues through the lens of safety, independence, recreation, and opportunities for young people.

Students also described appreciating Shelburne's small size, calm atmosphere, sense of community, and connection to nature.

Youth support growth but want it to be sustainable and affordable.

Students frequently discussed the need for more affordable housing, housing for people experiencing homelessness, and housing options that would allot more people to live in the community. Several students expressed concern about poverty, housing costs, and whether people who need housing can access it. Others questioned who new housing would serve and how the community can ensure that growth benefits existing residents while creating opportunities for others.

When discussing development, students weighed housing needs against environmental concerns, recognizing both the importance of protecting forests and open space and the need to provide homes for people. Many favored apartments and compact housing because they can accommodate more people while using less land, and several suggested locating new housing near services and businesses so that residents can walk, bike, or use public transportation.

Students also demonstrated a strong awareness of transportation equity and access. Many expressed support for improved public transit and discussed how transportation affects people's ability to access jobs, services, shopping, and community resources. Some questioned why communities elsewhere are able to rely less on cars and expressed interest in more frequent bus service and local transit options.

Representative comments:

- "People need homes."
- "We should have homeless resources in town."
- "I think we should put apartments near town in case people don't have cars."
- "Why don't we have better public transportation?"
- "More buses, people would walk more, less traffic"
- "The woods and nature should be protected, but we should build in the growth areas"

- “It costs money and workers to open restaurants. We need housing first, then commercial.”

Youth want more opportunities for recreation and social connection.

Students frequently identified a need for more activities, gathering spaces, and recreational opportunities for young people. Common suggestions included:

- Mountain bike trails and bike parks
- A town pool
- Teen gathering spaces
- Sports and recreation facilities
- Mini golf
- Community events
- Places to work after school

When discussing the Rice Lumber property, most students favored some form of public park, recreation area, or community space over pure commercial development. Students frequently noted that there are relatively few places for teenagers to spend time, socialize, or participate in activities independently.

Youth prioritize walking, biking, and transportation safety.

Transportation generated some of the strongest discussions among students. Many described wanting greater independence and the ability to safely travel around town without relying on parents for transportation.

Students repeatedly identified gaps in the sidewalks and bicycle network and expressed concerns about Rt 7, traffic congestion, long traffic signal delays, and unsafe conditions for walking and biking.

Students also discussed the importance of transportation options for young people, older adults, and people who do not drive.

Students also expressed support for improved public transportation, including more frequent bus service and local transit options.

Representative comments include:

- “Kids want to bike to see their friends”
- “There are no sidewalks on Route 7”
- “Imagine the kids. They want to bike to see their friends. We need sidewalks.”
- “Make the town easier for walking and biking.”

Lessons Learned & Reflections on the Engagement Process

Several lessons emerged from this engagement process that may help inform future planning and engagement efforts in Shelburne:

- **Residents care deeply about Shelburne's future.** Across interviews, focus groups, events, and surveys, residents showed a strong interest in discussing housing affordability, community character, transportation, economic development, environmental stewardship, and inclusion. Many participants were eager not only to share their own perspectives, but also to better understand the perspectives of others and explore solutions to complex community challenges.
- **Building trust takes time.** Despite offering stipends, meals, and multiple opportunities to participate, it remained difficult to engage some residents, particularly lower-income households and others who have not traditionally participated in municipal planning processes. For example, CCRPC distributed flyers in mobile home parks, mailed invitations to every household in two mobile home parks, and offered stipends and dinner for a focus group, yet no residents

ultimately attended. The experience reinforced that participation often depends on trust and relationships that must be built over time, not just during a planning process. Before folks are willing to participate, they need to believe their voice matters and can make a difference.

- **Community liaisons were the most effective outreach tool.** Working through trusted community liaisons was far more successful than traditional outreach methods alone. Paid community liaisons helped connect CCRPC with residents who may not otherwise have participated and provided valuable insight into community priorities and barriers to engagement.
- **Go where people already are.** Engagement activities held at existing community events and gathering places consistently attracted more participants than standalone planning events. Outreach at the Farmers Market, Town Meeting Day, school events, food distribution events, and other community gatherings helped reach residents who may never attend a public meeting.
- **People responded best to informal, welcoming conversations.** Some of the strongest conversations happened when engagement felt less like a public meeting and more like a community gathering. Shared meals, small-group discussions, and opportunities for personal connection helped people feel comfortable participating. Even small things, such as having the project manager's one-year-old son, Ray, at some events helped make conversations feel more approachable and less formal.
- **People want opportunities to connect, not just provide input.** Many participants came not only to share their opinions, but also to hear what others were thinking, discuss community challenges, and connect with neighbors. Future engagement efforts may be most successful when they create space for both dialogue and relationship-building.
- **Surveys have limitations.** While the survey generated 363 responses, it proved difficult to reach a broader cross-section of the community. Despite extensive promotion through events, partner organizations, municipal communications, flyers, social media, and direct outreach, responses still largely reflected residents who are already more likely to engage in local issues.

Town Plan Update Recommendations from CCRPC

In addition to the community engagement findings above, CCRPC staff identified several considerations based on lessons learned from this effort, recent updates to the ECOS Regional Plan, and current planning best practices. These recommendations and suggested actions do not necessarily reflect community feedback and should be considered separately from the findings summarized in this report.

Environmental Benefits & Burdens: Ensuring an Equitable Distribution

In 2022, Vermont adopted Act 154, the State's Environmental Justice Law, which seeks to ensure that all Vermonters have equitable access to environmental benefits such as clean air, clean water, healthy food, transportation options, and green space, while protecting communities from disproportionate environmental burdens such as pollution, climate risks, and limited access to services. The law also emphasizes meaningful participation in environmental decision-making by communities that have historically been underrepresented. Under Act 181, advancing the equitable distribution of environmental benefits and burdens was added as a planning goal for regional plans. As part of the 2026 ECOS Plan update, the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission conducted an Environmental Benefits and Burdens Analysis to better understand how planning decisions can affect the distribution of environmental benefits and burdens across the region.

While municipalities are not currently required to prepare a formal Environmental Benefits and Burdens Analysis as part of a town plan update, incorporating these considerations into local planning can help ensure that investments, policies, and development decisions benefit all residents and do not unintentionally increase existing inequities.

A Suggested Approach

As a part of the Town Plan update process, the Town could consider conducting the following analysis:

1. **Identify Existing Benefits and Burdens |** Review available data, local knowledge, and community feedback to identify where environmental benefits and burdens are currently concentrated within the community. Potential topics to examine include:
    a. Transportation access and mobility

b. Housing quality, affordability, and location
c. Access to parks, trails, recreation, and open space
d. Tree canopy and shade
e. Flooding and climate resilience
f. Air quality and traffic impacts
g. Water quality and stormwater management
h. Access to community services and facilities

Potential data sources include:

i. Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CJEST)
j. EPA's Environmental Justice Screen (EJScreen)
k. Municipal Climate Change Vulnerability Indicator Tool (ANR)
l. Vermont Natural Resources Atlas
m. The Vermont Social Vulnerability Index (VDH)

2. **Consider Who Experiences These Conditions |** Environmental Justice Focus Populations (EJFPs) are census block groups in which: (1) the annual median household income is not more than 80% of the statewide median household income; (2) Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) residents comprise at least 6% of the population; or (3) at least 1% of households have limited English proficiency.

   The CCRPC Demographic Map Viewer maps Chittenden County census block groups that meet one or more of these criteria. However, given the limitations of census data at the community scale and the relatively small size of Shelburne's population, these maps should be viewed as a starting point rather than a complete picture of environmental justice within the community.

   Using community engagement alongside available data, evaluate whether certain populations or neighborhoods experience greater environmental burdens or reduced access to environmental benefits. The Town should consider populations and neighborhoods that may not be readily identifiable through census data but may nevertheless experience disproportionate burdens or face barriers to accessing benefits.

   Consider the following communities:

   a. Mobile home park residents
   b. Older adults
   c. Renters

    d. Lower-income households
    e. Residents without access to a vehicle
    f. Residents who live near a major transportation corridor
    g. Residents in flood-prone areas
3. **Evaluate Future Planning Decisions |** The following questions should be used to inform major planning policy and investment decisions. Asking these questions early in the decision-making process help ensure that equity, environmental justice, resilience, and community benefits are considered before specific projects, infrastructure designs, or development proposals are advanced.

   The Town should incorporate these, or similar, questions into existing planning and policy workflows:
    a. Who benefits from this action?
    b. Could this action create or worsen burdens for any population?
    c. Does this action improve access to benefits for any population?
    d. Does this action reduce climate, flooding, or environmental risks?
    e. Are the benefits and investments being distributed equitably throughout the community?
    f. Will this action improve conditions for EJFPs or other underserved residents?

Suggested Town Plan Actions

- **Empower Town committees to play an active role in the Town Plan update.** Given their valuable expertise and perspectives, lean on committees to help inform policy development, review draft content, and support community engagement throughout the planning process. Consider supporting committees in broadening participation and diversifying membership so that more residents have meaningful opportunities to get involved. Community members noted that traditional meeting formats and schedules, particularly meetings held during the workday, can create barriers to participation for many residents.
- **Continue to revisit and reference community feedback throughout the update process.** This report is not intended to be reviewed once and stored away. As goals, policies, and actions are developed, periodically checking them against feedback summarized in this report can help ensure the Plan reflects community priorities and concerns.
- **Integrate climate and equity throughout the Plan.** Rather than treating climate change and equity as standalone chapters or sections of the plan, consider incorporating these topics as lenses that inform decisions across all chapters. This

was feedback that was also received from community members throughout engagement.

- **Consider the addition of a chapter focused on equitable planning practices.** Consider adding a chapter entitled *Equitable Planning Practices* that focuses on how planning processes themselves can be made more inclusive, accessible, and responsive to community needs. Goals and actions include integrating the environmental justice impact questions listed above into planning decision-making, expanding community engagement efforts, reducing barriers to participation (e.g., providing stipends, childcare, food, language access services, etc.), strengthening relationships with underrepresented community members, enhancing community education around town planning, and reviewing municipal policies and practices through an equity and environmental justice lens.
- **Explore opportunities to acknowledge and engage Indigenous perspectives.** Consider working with local indigenous leaders to explore how indigenous history, perspectives, and stewardship practices might be meaningfully reflected in the Town Plan. This could include a land acknowledgement as well as actions.
- **Continue investing in community engagement beyond the Town Plan update.** The engagement process demonstrated that community members value opportunities to connect with one another and discuss the future of the community. Consider including actions that support ongoing outreach, engagement, and community dialogue. This could include deepening partnerships with the Pierson Library, local organizations, and community liaisons.
- **Leverage CCRPC resources.** CCRPC can provide support, tools, and resources for future engagement efforts, including updated engagement policies, community liaison connections, facilitation support, and more.

The following are examples of actions that could help promote a more equitable distribution of environmental benefits and burdens in Shelburne. These are just examples and are not intended to be comprehensive. Each town is unique and additional work should be done to expand upon and introduce additional goals:

- Encourage housing development in locations with access to services, transportation options, parks, and community amenities.
- Support preservation and improvement of existing affordable housing and mobile home communities.
- Consider strategies to reduce displacement and maintain housing opportunities for residents across income levels.

- Prioritize pedestrian, bicycle, and transit improvements that improve access to schools, employment, parks, shopping, and community facilities.
- Improve safety and accessibility for people who do not drive, including older adults, youth, and people with disabilities.
- Expand access to parks, trails, and recreational opportunities throughout the community.
- Increase tree planting and green infrastructure in areas with limited shade or tree canopy.
- Prioritize flood mitigation and resilience investments in areas facing the greatest risk.
- Continue targeted outreach to populations that may face barriers to participation.
- Partner with community organizations to engage residents who are often underrepresented in planning processes.
- Support investments and policies that reduce fossil fuel use and greenhouse gas emissions while improving energy affordability, reliability, and resilience.
- Incorporate extreme heat preparedness and mitigation into planning, infrastructure, and public health initiatives to reduce risks to residents, businesses, and community facilities.

Appendix A: Shelburne Should Lead; a poem by Ethan Nappi

CCRPC partnered with the Pierson Library to dedicate a Coffee and Conversations discussion to the Shelburne Town Plan and the community's future. The conversation focused on balancing community goals and strengthening public engagement in Town decision-making. One attendee shared the following poem, written for the occasion.

Town Plans are intended to set a vision for the future and inspire action. This poem complements that vision by grounding it in residents' lived experiences. It reminds us that behind planning goals are real concerns about safety, affordability, belonging, environmental stewardship, and opportunity, and encourages us to consider how future decisions can advance equity and benefit all members of the community.

Shelburne Should Lead by Ethan Nappi

You've asked where we'd like to see Shelburne go.
I'd like to see signs that make traffic slow.
In the dark of night, headlights pass like lightning strikes.
A community member says they still see the blood of their loved one on the streets at night.

They say we should build a swimming pool,
but I wonder if our kids feel safe in school.
Do they get proper, healthy nutrition?
Will they grow to be able to afford tuition?
What of those who've known no other land?
Will you walk beside them and take a stand?

Our leaders say they want housing, and to lend a helping hand,
but propose to build it on our wetlands.
The floods have reached Vermont's door —
maybe nature's way of settling a score.
Will washed-away homes help the poor?

We need food and warmth for those without.
Why is it up to the staff of Pierson Library to figure it out?
They shelter and gather and give what they can,
but it can't make up for the folly of man.

It shouldn't be necessary to lock our doors,
but the need grows apparent ever more.
People want the thieves and their heads,
but what if we tried to love and teach instead?
What if we worked together and broke bread?

I'm sure you wanted something fun and relaxed,
but the world is hurting — and that's a fact.
If you want to know what Shelburne needs,
lead the fight for equity and do it proud for all to see.

Appendix B: Survey Takeaways

CCRPC, in conjunction with the Planning Commission, conducted a survey in the winter and spring of 2026. The survey contained 36 questions that spanned key Town Plan topics like transportation, housing, climate change, environmental protection, community character, and community engagement. There were 363 recorded responses. The survey was shared through Front Porch Forum, Shelburne News, coasters at Shelburne restaurants and bars, posted on flyers around town, shared through the Shelburne Community School weekly newsletter to parents, emailed to Wake Robin residents, and highlighted at all engagement events. The following are summarized takeaways from the survey results.

- Survey respondents were primarily homeowners, ages 35–74, and middle- to higher-income households.
- Residents most value Shelburne's natural beauty, rural landscapes, parks and trails, and small-town feel. Historic village character ranked lower than these qualities.
- The most commonly identified challenges were property taxes, housing costs, traffic, and limited shopping/dining options.
- There is broad support for increasing a wide range of housing types, particularly affordable housing, smaller homes, and senior housing.
- Most respondents see benefits to adding housing, especially for local workers, young families, older adults, and increasing affordable housing options. Concerns focused primarily on traffic, infrastructure capacity, impacts to open space, impacts to the environment, and community character.
- The most supported affordable housing strategies were incentivizing affordable housing near services, partnering with nonprofit housing providers, preserving existing affordable housing, and investing in infrastructure that supports housing.
- Residents currently value local businesses, tourism/arts/cultural destinations, access to everyday goods and services close to home, and a quieter economy. Residents would like to see more restaurants, cafés, gathering places, locally owned businesses, and businesses that serve everyday needs.
- Adding or improving walking and biking paths, improving access to Lake Champlain, and improving maintenance of existing parks and trails were the highest preferred actions the Town could take to improve access to outdoor spaces for residents.
- Water quality, loss of open space and wildlife habitat, climate change, and the impacts of development and sprawl were identified as the community's most significant environmental concerns.

- Route 7 was overwhelmingly identified as the place where people feel least safe walking or biking. Residents strongly support additional sidewalks, protected bike facilities, shared-use paths, traffic calming strategies, and safer crossings to improve transit throughout Shelburne.
- Residents preferred the addition of more affordable ways to live in Shelburne, more places to gather informally, and more community events welcoming to all as the top three ways the Town could support Resident's feeling of belonging.
- Residents want greater investment in the Village Center, Route 7 corridor, neighborhood connectivity, and transportation infrastructure.
- There were many services respondents indicated they would be willing to pay more in taxes for, with the preferred options being conservation of farmland, forests, and natural areas, walk and bike safety improvements, and affordable housing developments.
- Respondents indicated that clearer communication from the Town, more opportunities to participate, more events held evenings and weekends, and clearer information about how to get involved in local decision-making would support making it easier for young families, working professionals, and other busy residents to participate in Town business.